Children's perspectives on values and rules in Australian early education

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Introduction

It is widely understood that early education is a significant arena in which children learn about moral and conventional values. Values education, beginning in the early years, is often viewed as important for promoting a tolerant and cohesive society by helping children to become responsible and contributing members of society (Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2007).

In recent years, issues relating to moral and conventional values have been emphasized in Australian educational policies and initiatives. Spurred on by national and international debate, there has been strong social and political interest in values education, democracy in schools and children's rights (DEST, 2005). The idea of young children as active subjects constructing their own value systems has also received increasing international attention in recent years (Corsaro, 2009; Johansson, 2011b), although this has not been a strong focus in Australian policy for early childhood education (Ailwood et al., 2011).

This study concerns children's own understandings of values and rules for how to treat others and for participation in school. In 2008 – 2009, an Australian Research Council funded project team visited seven schools in south-east Queensland, focusing on early years teachers' practices and perspectives of moral values education. In this paper we focus on one aspect of this research, by examining children's own views about moral and conventional values, in terms of rules and participation in everyday school life. More specifically this paper focuses on the children's responses to the questions:

- What does it mean to do the right thing in school?
- What are the rules in school, who decides the rules and what happens when the rules are broken?

Values education in the early years: a phenomenological perspective

Understanding children's ideas about *doing the right thing* and rules in school is important because culturally and contextually they form a common basis for moral and conventional values and rules in Australian society and in education (Johansson, 2009). Values may include both moral and conventional values. Moral values include ideas for how to care for others wellbeing,

justice and rights while conventional values refer to socially constructed rules for order and how to behave in school (Killen & Smetana, 2006).

This study argues that values education is significant for the child's being; as a moral person here and now and as a citizen in the future society, and that children's ideas about such values inform their moral learning (Johansson, 2011a, 2011b). The research tradition of phenomenology enables us to take account of children's ideas and experiences for learning values and forms the theoretical framework for this paper. From this ontological perspective, the child is construed as a perceiving subject who is inseparable from, and in interaction with, the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, see also Johansson, 2011b). According to Merleau-Ponty, human life is intersubjective, in that we are related to others and we are dependent on each other. Power is always present in these relations of dependence and responsibility for the other. It is a concrete intersubjective relationship out of which moral values and rules for behaviour emerge. This ontology implies that learning about moral and conventional values is socially constructed and embedded in history, time, and space. The child is viewed as an interactive agent, a member of society, involved in manifold cultural settings and life-worlds and engaged in various existential periods in life, which are all of significance for learning about values. Such learning involves children's intersubjective experiences with peers and teachers, and these experiences are often expressed as rules for how to behave and how to take part in everyday life in the context of school (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2007).

Learning about values in the early years

The phenomenological approach used to understand children's ideas and experiences about values in school is underrepresented in previous research. Much research focuses, instead, on investigating children's values from a psychological and developmental paradigm (Johansson, 2007).

There is a need for more research that draws upon holistic and interactive traditions, such as phenomenology, to understand how children learn values. These traditions emphasize the complexity of influences on learning values which include: the ideas of children and educators; the influence of context and culture; and children's relationships and experiences (Johansson, 2011b; Killen & Smetana, 2006). In addition, learning about values is intertwined with taken for granted expectations about how children are supposed to take part (or not) in the construction of values and rules in the school community.

The notion of children as active and critical in learning about values means that their relationships and experiences are significant in the process of construction and reconstruction of moral meanings (Corsaro, 2009). While it is acknowledged that children may have less experience than adults, they can actively engage with issues and contribute to constructing social order (Corsaro, 2009; Cobb, Danby & Farrell, 2005; Cobb-Moore, Danby & Farrell, 2009; Danby & Theobald, 2012; Thornberg, 2009, 2010). They are able to differentiate between

different social domains and separate moral values from conventional and personal values (Killen & Smetana, 2006; Thornberg, 2009; 2010). Young children uphold values, display care for others and perceive rights and responsibilities. For example, Johansson (2007) found rights to be a significant concern from the perspective of the children, even from the youngest children's point of view. Children between one and three years old defended their own and their friends' rights to objects and resources, to share worlds with peers and to express their opinions in the everyday interactions in preschool. Teachers, on the other hand, were concerned with values of care, at least from a discourse level.

Learning about rules – part of values education

Children's knowledge and understanding of conventional values include their understanding of following rules, but research suggests that what is often lacking is critical thinking and discussion in relation to the rules (Thornberg, 2010). Children have limited opportunities to negotiate rules or engage in decision-making and so schools may serve to disempower children. This suggests that there is a gap between political and curriculum intentions (children as active citizens) and actual school practice (children as disempowered rule followers). Other studies have also identified that children's influence in early education is restricted, often as a result of teachers' attitudes, rules and use of power (Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005; Cobb, Danby, & Farrell, 2005; Danby & Theobald, 2012).

Emilson and Johansson (2009) discerned disciplinary, democratic and caring values in teachers' communication of values in Swedish in day-care settings. Disciplinary values concerned conventional rules and manners and required children to obey their teachers. Democratic values related to participation and caring values referred to the importance of showing concern for others. Caring and disciplinary values were commonly expressed while democratic values were the least expressed values in teachers' everyday communication with children. In a recent study Emilson and Johansson (2013) found that teachers view democratic values as important, yet such values were restricted to teachers' approval. When children claim to participate in matters that question the schedule for teachers planning for example, children's initiative was dismissed or ignored.

A complexity of dimensions are involved in children's learning about values and children play an important part in constructing and reconstructing their own value systems. These issues will be addressed in this study of children's own views about moral and conventional values and rules in the context of school as the main focus. The study address children as significant informants about values in school, which brings new and important knowledge to inform teacher education and educational practice in the field of values education in the early years.

The study

To investigate children's ideas about values in schools, 11 classrooms in seven schools in South-East Queensland were selected. In total, 100 children between the ages of four years six months

and eight years ten months participated in the study. A breakdown of the age groups and gender of the participants can be seen in Table 1 below.

There were four classrooms in one independent school, four individual classrooms from four Christian schools, two in a community run school and one in a government school. Before commencing data collection and following ethics approval, relevant permissions and consent were obtained from principals, teachers, parents and children. Consent forms that were sent home to parents and guardians contained a section specifically for children. This section included a script for parents to read to children explaining the study and requesting their consent.

[Insert Table 1, *Age and gender of children who participated in interviews,* about here]

Procedures

Interviews with the children were conducted one-on-one with a researcher. Each child participated in one interview. The interviews, lasting approximately twenty minutes, were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Three interviews were unable to be analysed due to language difficulties or minimal responses. This paper focuses on the children's responses to the questions:

- What does it mean to do the right thing in school?
- What are the rules in school, who decides the rules and what happens when the rules are broken?

The interviews, from a phenomenological perspective, are regarded as a social event of communicated meaning between the facilitator and children. It is important to establish an environment of trust and respect in which the interview can take place. Therefore, the interviews took place in a familiar setting in the school, usually outside of the classroom in a room in which the children were familiar. To begin with, the facilitator spent some time in the classrooms, observing the activities and becoming familiar with the children and the context before starting the interviews.

At the beginning of the interview, the children were reminded about their right to end the interview at any time. The interviewer then briefly reviewed the consent form that the children had signed prior to the interview. The children were asked if they recalled the form and also if they still wished to participate. Once the children's consent was again confirmed, the interview proceeded. Two children decided to stop the interview. The interview was structured to encourage the children to talk about their ideas, to follow the child's narrative and support him or her to describe and exemplify his/her meanings. This demanded sensitivity from the facilitator in regard to the children's narratives. Since the theme of the questions revolved around what is expected as a good behaviour in school (i.e. right and wrong) it was extremely important to build

a trustful relationship between the child and the facilitator in order to come close to the child's intention, rather than children giving a "correct" answer. It is our impression that this relationship was built, as the dialogues involved narratives that seemed to override expectations of appropriate responding. However, the influence of the researcher presence cannot be discounted, as well as the fact that specific questions were asked which may have elicited particular types of responses.

Analysis

The aim of the study was to gain knowledge about children's ideas about moral and conventional values. The analyses aim to understand the meanings expressed and created by the children in their dialogues with facilitators. The focus of interest is also to explain these meanings in terms of moral and conventional values. Therefore the analyses have been inspired by hermeneutics (Riceour, 1971) which involve a dialectic between understanding and explaining a phenomenon. This approach is common in phenomenological analysis. Within hermeneutics the aim is not to reach an absolute truth, since the research is built on the idea of interpretation as a way of understanding others. Rather, the intention of the analyses is to reach the most reliable understanding of the meanings expressed. Argumentation and clarity, as well as critical interpretations, are of significance in this process (Riceour, 1971).

The analysis involves consideration of sections of data, including individual interviews and responses to particular questions, as well as the totality of interviews. This interactive process where the researcher's focus shift between parts and totality of the empirical material is referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1996). Both analytical closeness and distance are needed. The researcher interacts with the text, searching for and creating meanings based on the interview transcripts (Gadamer, 1996). The interviews were read repeatedly in order to understand the meanings from the children's point of view and the described context and to interpret these meanings in terms of values. The first readings aimed to understand the meanings expressed and to relate these to all children in the specific class in the specific school (i.e. preparatory, year one, two and three). Notes were taken about values simultaneously with this reading. The next reading aimed to repeatedly scrutinize the meanings expressed and to identify the values implied in these meanings. In order to reach the most relevant interpretations, alternative interpretations were compared and contrasted. The third step in this analytic process scrutinized the identified values in relation to all data (all children's interviews from the participating schools). This process led to new insights and to some changes of the interpretations. In addition, the data has been interpreted against moral theory, as well as against previous research. An overview of the responses to these questions will now be provided and selected responses highlighted.

Findings

The results indicate that children experience various rules and expectations for how to behave and treat others in school. According to these children, moral (care for others) as well as conventional (discipline and order) values in school seem important in the everyday life of school. However, their responses indicated a predominance of conventional values over moral values.

Doing the right thing, according to the children, relates to moral values and also to conventional values to maintain order in school. The value of care for others' wellbeing and the value of conventions as the good disciplined student stand out as common threads working together in the children's descriptions.

In the following section, the results are presented in themes connected to the concept of *doing the right thing*. First, the responses of children who talked about doing the right thing as related to moral values are highlighted. Second, responses of children who emphasized doing the right thing as connected to conventional values are presented. The children's various understandings have been illustrated with quotations followed by interpretations. The quotations have been chosen to illustrate the various viewpoints and qualities of values from the children's perspectives.

Doing the right thing: A moral values issue

Doing the right thing implies, from the perspective of the children, that you show concern for others' wellbeing. When the children spoke about doing wrong, they often referred to not hurting others. However, they also described mutual helping and sharing indicating reciprocity as an important moral value.

Not hurting others

The value of care for others' wellbeing is implied in the obligatory rule of not hurting others. This rule was frequently described by the children. They justifythis rule on moral grounds and on the idea that fighting and hitting hurts and that hurting others is not a 'nice' thing to do. In one of the schools the rule for not hurting others was extended to: "*Not hurting others'feelings"*. In this case, the moral value is expressed as concern for others' feelings. When the children talk about doing wrong they often refer to hurting others' feelings by hitting, pushing, being mean, teasing and destroying others creations:

Facilitator: What are the wrong things to do at school?

Matt:1 You are not allowed to hit someone. /…/ And you are not allowed to tease them.You are not allowed to hurt their feelings. /…/ Because it is not nice. (boy, 5 years old)

From the perspective of Matt in the excerpt above, doing wrong is about moral values and more specifically, about the rule for not hurting others through teasing or hitting. The value of others' wellbeing is implied in the reasoning above. This young boy's reasoning indicates how moral and conventional values can be interrelated. Matt justifies his position, in that hitting and teasing can hurt others' feelings, and doing this is not nice. In this context the word 'nice' is interpreted as morally related since it is connected with hurting others' feelings. There are certain obligatory rules implied in the narrative. For example, you are not allowed to hit, tease or hurt others' feelings. The next quotation implies fairness as another moral justification for doing the right thing:

Julian The right thing to do is be kind and nice. /…/ The wrong thing is to punch and kick and scratch, that's the wrong thing.

Facilitator: Okay. So why is it wrong?

Julian: Well, just because it's not very nice and it's unfair. (5 years old)

Being kind and nice are associated with *doing the right thing*. Julian bases his reasoning about doing wrong on two justifications; it is neither nice, nor fair to hurt someone. While fairness is connected with morality, the word 'nice' can have both moral and conventional connotations, which can make it difficult to interpret. Our interpretation here is that the word 'nice' is given a moral dimension by these children, because of the context referring to moral values. In this case, Julian refers to the physical side of hurting.

In addition, the children seem to be receptive to each others' experiences. The quotation below connects with the value of other children's wellbeing. The understanding of whether something is right or wrong is gained from discerning reactions of others. Crying indicates, from the perspective of this preparatory-aged boy, Cliff, that someone has been hurt:

Facilitator: Is there any other way you know what's right and wrong?

Cliff: Yes. /…/When peoples crying you know not to do that if you done it.

Facilitator: Okay, so what does it mean to do the right thing at school?

Cliff: It means to not hurt anybody (5 years old).

Cliff states that when a peer cries, this is a sign that you have done that person wrong and that you should stop your behaviour. He then goes on to suggest that it is wrong to hurt others. Cliff

[1]Pseudonyms are used to maintain confidentiality

expresses a moral judgment connected with precautions for his own actions. Let us now consider doing the right thing through helping and sharing.

Reciprocity, helping and sharing

To do the right thing in school is, from the perspectives of the children, being nice to others and helping them. In addition, *doing the right thing* means to share, to make friends and to include others in play. Reciprocity is part of doing the right thing, as is the Golden Rule. This Golden Rule is expressed by one of the children: "You treat them like you". This utterance indicates that treating others as yourself is important; good intentions seem to be taken for granted in this understanding. Let us first look at an example about helping others:

Facilitator:	What does it mean to do the right thing at school?
Sam:	Being good and helping your friends and if you help them if they can't do it. If they're sad and nobody lets them play, you can let them play with you. (5 years old)

Helping means to provide support when someone is in need or unable to manage alone. From Sam's perspective, sensitivity to the other's situation seems to be important. When someone is left out from the community and is not allowed to play, Sam articulates that he feels a moral responsibility to care for them and involve them in the play. He is responsive to the others' emotional experiences and he also tries to do something to support the other.

To do the right thing seems to involve aspects of mutuality; for example playing and sharing. The next quote from a preparatory-aged girl, exemplifies reciprocity as a moral value:

Lilly: To like be nice and be kind and always play with each other. Like if you get a ball you throw it to someone and they throw it back. (5years old)

Implied in this is a sense of trust when doing the right thing. The narrative indicates that Lilly expects a positive response to the invitation. Communication with others involves intersubjectivity. In this quotation, inviting someone to play requires from this person a moral responsibility to respond. The word 'always' indicates that this is an obligatory norm: You should always play with each other. The next quotation involves a complexity of dimensions for doing the right thing in school. A boy of 8 years, Tony, describes his view:

Tony:	Well I remember when Bill was destroying stuff. That wasn't very nice and it was a rule break.
Facilitator:	So why do you think it was wrong to do that?
Tony:	Because we had been working a long time on an experiment and Bill went and wrecked it.

Facilitator: Okay. Can you tell me then what you think it means to do the right thing at school?

Tony: To do the right thing I think means to do what's right to other people and not just yourself but still to do what's right for yourself. /.../ And also to obey the teacher. /…/ Keeping in school bounds. That's all.

From Tony's narrative we can understand that destroying something that others have created is the wrong thing to do in school. His argument is based on two ideas: first, destroying is breaking the rules, and second, it is not nice to destroy things because of the efforts others might have put into it. Both conventional and moral issues are represented. When describing what doing the right thing means, others'perspectivesare in the forefront of Tony's considerations – nevertheless, he also values the idea of taking care of himself. The important thing, however, is to balance concerns for your own and others' well-being. Again, we find reciprocity as a dimension involved in doing the right thing in school.

We have seen from the children's narratives that doing the right thing involves not hurting others, caring for others by helping, as well as reciprocity and sharing. In the next section, we examine conventional values as another dimension of doing the right thing presented by the children.

Doing the right thing: Conventional values

Doing the right thing is also connected with conventional values and rules. In the interviews the children often refer to the school rules, to discipline and manners and to the authority of their teachers. Being good in school appears to be connected with acting in-line with expectations of a school child. The value seems to relate to obligations, but also around issues of trust in authorities and authorities' concern for the good of children.

To trust and obey the teachers

Doing the right thing in school, from the children's perspectives, often concerns adapting to expectations from the authorities. Many of the children's responses to this question imply an understanding that the right thing relates to doing your best and following teachers' instructions. Both respect and concern for teachers is implied in several of the children's reflections. A few of the children reflect on respecting others' creations and others as persons. Listening to teachers is significant, as exemplified in the following quote:

Beth: When there was this boy that didn't do the right thing, 'cause he was supposed to do the name card first but he did the game first.

Facilitator: Why was that the wrong thing to do?

Beth: Cause the teacher said we always have to do our name cards first. (5 years old)

From Beth's perspective, it seems that children are expected to listen and follow the teacher's instructions. The reason she is referring to is the teacher's authority. Children's ideas about the rules in school seem also to be framed by a strong understatement that decisions relating to rules belong to the teachers and that the children's influence on rules is particularly limited. Also here teachers' authority seems important and unquestionable:

Facilitator: Who decides the rules?

Clay: The teacher.

Facilitator: How do you know that?

Clay: Because she's the boss at school. (5 years)

There is an assumption that the teachers decide the rules, and from the boy's perspective, the reason for this is that the teacher is the boss; therefore, she is expected to take responsibility for decisions. Knowing that there is an authority to trust and to take care of decisions can also be an important matter of safety for the children. In the next quotation we see that the child is aware of the structural system in school to uphold the rules. There is another authority above the teachers that ensure the rule system is upheld:

Facilitator: What happens if the rules are broken?

Sharon: You get sent to the Principal. (6 years)

There is no hesitation among the majority of the children that the teacher decides the rules. According to this child, the consequence for rule breaking is being sent to the Principal. It is interesting to note the formulation used: "You get sent to the Principal." This implies that the child is aware that there is limited ability to react to the kind of treatment that the school system will offer you in this situation.

Shared responsibility for rules

As we can see from the children's responses the belief in teachers as an unquestionable authority seems strong. There is however one exception, in which we can grasp another way to approach authority in school implying that children are involved in decisions about rules. A few children seem to connect both themselves and the teachers with decisions about rules. This is, however, a rare position, mainly found within one of the school sites visited. Here, the children describe meetings where they themselves and the teachers discuss and create rules together.

Well nobody really decides them, we kind of have meetings and there's - we have a meeting every Thursday...and we can decide rules. (Polly, 7 years)

This quotation indicates a sharing of decisions between teachers and children. Still, the children imply an awareness of the adult's mandate as a supervisor and leader in school. It is the teacher who takes the ultimate responsibility for rules. In the next section, we will have a closer look at values relating to order and the following of rules.

The value of order and rules

The children seem to take it for granted that the rules in school are to be followed and not to be questioned. Children seem also to rely on the rules. The child in the next quotation provides the impression of trusting that the rules in school are for the good of children.

Facilitator:	Could you think about what makes something wrong. Why is something wrong?
Greg:	Because school rules is good stuff.
Facilitator:	So if it's against the rules?
Greg:	You can't do it. (5 years old)

We can learn from Greg that he is confident that the school rules represent positive regulations; "good stuff" as he puts it. In one way, this implies trust and safety from the child's perspective. Greg is also convinced that the rules are obligatory, and there seems to be no questioning of the rules. The rules involve the requirement to listen and learn about right and wrong, as we learn from the next quotation.

Facilitator:	What does it mean to do the right thing at school?
William:	Listen and learn how to do the right stuff and listen and you have to sit down and be quiet, whole body listen. (5 years)

According to William, listening to teachers is important when doing the right thing. Listening involves keeping control of your whole body. One can imagine the efforts and difficulties a young child might experience in trying to hold back the body; "don't move a muscle" as William describes. Conventional values seem to involve discipline and demands to regulate the (child's) body, and the child is aware of the fact that he or she is responsible for following this rule. In the next narrative, we learn about several disciplinary regulations related to rules:

April:	Well it means that you have to do the right thing at school. /…/ You have to sit on the mat and listen to the teacher. /…/ And you need to play, but when the bell rings you have to come straight away. If you don't, you lose ticks. (5 years old)

April highlights the importance of listening to teachers, and following the rules. The consequence of doing the wrong thing can be to lose ticks. April talks about self control, teacher control and control by the rules. The control system seems intertwined and working as a totality. Again, moral justifications do not seem to be involved here. Rather, it is the disciplinary value that justifies doing the right thing in school.

Manners: Being nice

The children also regard social customs and manners, such as being polite and using nice words, as part of doing the right thing. Another aspect of doing the right thing is to be a proper pupil, to do what is expected in class and to do it well. These refer to conventions, rather than to moral issues. From the children's responses, we can imagine a picture of a polite, disciplined schoolchild doing schoolwork and following the rules in an appropriate way. In the next examples, this picture emerges:

Andrew:	Right is being good and cause your behaviour is being nice and good and then you get a tick. (5 years old)
Facilitator:	What other things are right, other right things to do?
Ezekiel:	They say good words.
Facilitator	Yeah. Like what?
Ezekiel:	Please and thank you and them. (Prep class)

Doing the right thing in the context of school is about being a good pupil and doing what is expected, but also to 'do your best'. These aspects illustrate how conventions for behaving correctly as a pupil in school seem to be taken for granted and carried out by the children.

Based on the children's responses, it seems that doing the right thing in a school context involves adapting behaviour to meet teachers' requirements and that of specific school rules. The justifications for doing the right thing are based on conventions, rules for manners and discipline and the possible consequences that might follow for yourself, rather than the consequences for others' wellbeing. The moral justification (care for others) appears not to be in focus in this dimension of *doing the right thing*. Rather, the conventional value (do what the teacher says) seems to be prioritized.

Discussion

According to the children in this study, doing the right thing in school concerns both values of care for others (others' wellbeing) and values of conventions. The results indicate that doing the right thing involves both a concern for others and for the social order in school, which support previous results from other studies (Johansson, 2011a; Killen & Smetana, 2006; Thornberg,

2010). Such dimensions are important and necessary to uphold safety and trust, as well as community and school goals. There is a need both for care and for order in a community. Nevertheless, one can ponder about the role these values might have in education and how they are prioritized. Let us first scrutinize the meaning of these values from the children's perspectives, as revealed in the phenomenological analysis.

Rules and obligations connected with the value of others' wellbeing seem, from the children's responses, to be of importance in the schools. The children often refer to obligatory rules in this matter. A rule for not hurting others was often referred to by the children. The rules are mainly articulated as things not permitted, or as obligations. The value of others' wellbeing is, for example, often described by the children in terms of not hurting others. Nevertheless, doing the right thing not only includes obligations, but also intentions to share, to make friends and include others in play. Intersubjectivity and reciprocity seem also to be important in these children's morality, involving concern for others and a desire to act with the best intentions for others. This can be connected with the concept of responsiveness developed by Blum (1994) which refers to being open to others' predicaments in order to act altruistically. This supports previous research indicating that children show concern for others in various ways and defend the norm of not hurting others in their everyday interactions in school and preschool (Johansson, 2011a, 2011b; Thornberg, 2010).

In addition, doing the right thing concerns rules and behaviour connected with discipline and order in school, as well as expectations for appropriate behaviour within a school context. A majority of children refer to the importance of listening and obeying teachers and the rules in school when talking about doing the right thing. Disciplinary values are often described as obligations and framed in negative terms as things not allowed. Emilson and Johansson (2009) had similar findings in teachers' communication with children: both disciplinary and caring values seemed to be expressed as obligations. Interestingly, several researchers have shown a shift in education where discipline is created by implicit rules and routines and involving children in disciplining themselves without explicit instructions, demands or rewards (Bartholdsson, 2007). This does not seem to be the case in most of the schools examined within this study. On the contrary, disciplinary rules and values appear evident and visible in the everyday life in school. The children seem well aware of rules. They are informed about rules and the rules are upheld by school authorities and through disciplinary consequences. Many of the children talk about exclusion from the ongoing activities as a consequence of breaking the rules. Some children reported that consequences could include exclusion from school or from the ongoing activities (time-out), whereas others described the costs for rule transgressions in terms of losing rewards. The pedagogy implied in these children's descriptions seemed to be related to behaviourism, where human beings are thought to be formed through stimuli such as reward and punishments (Skinner, 1969).

The children in this investigation appear to take it for granted that the teachers (and other authorities) have the right to decide about the rules and consequences of rule-breaking. The

children (with a few exceptions) do not refer to rules as their responsibility or question authority or the rules. Children's ideas about the rules in school appear to be framed by a view that rules are the teachers' (and other authorities) responsibilities and that the children's decisions on rules are particularly limited. Their responses also indicate a confidence in adults' competence to handle such issues. It seems to be a matter of trusting teachers to know what is best for children. In this kind of community, participating seems to relate to adapting to the rules rather than children taking part in decisions about rules or discussing the relevance of these rules. Grindland (2011) found similar results in a study analysing discourses in Norwegian preschool teachers' talk about mealtimes. When a discourse of order prevails at mealtimes there seems to be limited possibilities for children to participate in creating the rules. Rather, the children are expected to follow and uphold those rules.

Thornberg (2009) found that rules in school serve as an indicator of expectations for being a good citizen. The 'good' citizen adapts to rules and regulations, takes responsibility for their behaviour and does one's best. Critical thinking, opposing or questioning and changing rules is not involved in this kind of work (Thornberg, 2009). The results of this study suggest similar findings. The discourses for being part of the school community embedded in the children's responses provide a picture of a caring citizen supporting the rule for not hurting others, following the rules and regulations in school, and doing his or her very best. The children present themselves as generally powerless in school. To negotiate, reflect on, or change rules does not seem to be an option from the perspective of these children and the authority of the teacher is not questioned. This is also indicated in our analyses of the teachers' epistemic beliefs and beliefs of their pedagogy for moral education (Brownlee, et al., submitted). Only a few of the teachers described practices where the children were invited to discuss and reflect on rules. According to Nucci, (2001) the construction of a more developed social understanding relies on discussion, because discussion enables a person's ideas to come into direct contact with others' ideas. The teacher's responsibility is to show children how to listen to arguments and how to bring the different pieces of a discussion into focus. Thornberg's research (2010) indicates that children become more positive about school rules if they can make sense of the rules. Through discussing and understanding the rules they can accept the motives for the rules as reasonable and trustful. Therefore, teachers need to involve children in discussions about rules and values and their justifications. The challenge is to reflect on how children might be involved in such processes but also to analyse how children's own ideas of values and rules, and their justifications, may be taken into account in teaching for values. In particular, it is important to balance between priorities of conventional values and rules for authority, manners and discipline on the one hand and values for participation, democracy and concern for others on the other hand.

Conclusion

The overall aim of this investigation has been to create knowledge about children's ideas about values and rules for how to behave and how to treat others in everyday life in the context of school. In short, the responses show that values for others' wellbeing, reciprocity, as well as

discipline and authority are frequently referred to by the children when they talk about right and wrong behaviour in the school context. Values for care, rights, and justice have been identified in previous research on children's perspectives on moral issues (Killen & Smetana, 2006; Emilson & Johansson, 2009; Johansson, 2007). Values related to discipline, order and authority are not as frequently described from the children's perspectives in previous research although these issues seem important in everyday life of early education (Thornberg, 2009, 2010). Values of democracy, equity and justice (MCEETYA, 2008) seem not to be in forefront in these children's reasoning when talking about values in school. They imply a position as a receiver and "doer" of the rules and values in school, rather than an active participant involved in reflecting and negotiating about different values and rules and the priorities and justifications they are based on. It is important to note that this might also be a result of the questions asked when interviewing the children, and also that this study is about talking about, rather than doing, morality in school. There is a need for further analyses of children's perspectives on values and participation in school for example by studying the children's views of different types of rules, their priorities and links with different values.

The children in this study seem to possess a core base of values, rights, and responsibilities related to the community of their school. Being part of this kind of community, their responsibility seems, however, to be to adapt to the school system, rather than being an active participant in constructing the value system. This core of knowledge and values are useful in the specific school communities in which children live their everyday school life. The idea of an active participating child, however, where children are viewed as competent social actors, with their own ideas, opinions, values and knowledge to contribute, still seems far away.

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List of tables to be inserted

To be inserted on page 5:

Table 1. *Age and gender of children who participated in interviews*

Year/age group	Number of children interviewed	Female	Male
Prep	62	14	48
Yr1	17	9	8
Yr2	7	3	4
Yr3	11	6	5
Unknown age	3	2	1
Total	100	34	66